

# CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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## ***Jersey City & Parks Coalition Win One of Three National Make A Difference Day Awards for Municipalities for “BIG DIG” Planting Project***

**JERSEY CITY** – Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy and the **Jersey City Parks Coalition** announced today that the **City of Jersey City** and **The Jersey City Parks Coalition** have been awarded one of three national **Make A Difference Day** awards for municipalities for the collaborative project known as the “**BIG DIG**” that saw 18,000 tulip and daffodil bulbs planted across the city last October.

“We are extremely honored to receive this prestigious award and recognition,” said **Mayor Healy**. “Make A Difference Day, and particularly the ‘BIG DIG’ project, illustrated the immense value of public-private partnerships and what a positive impact volunteerism can have on a community.”

Thirteen volunteer initiatives will be recognized with the 2012 Make A Difference Day Awards at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., on April 19. Make A Difference Day, the nation's largest day of service, was created in 1992 by Gannett Co., Inc.'s *USA WEEKEND* Magazine along with partners, Newman's Own®, Inc. and Points of Light. Newman's Own will donate a total of \$130,000, awarding ten volunteer initiatives \$10,000 each and presenting three cities \$10,000 each for their local projects.

According to a press release from *USA WEEKEND*, the winners were chosen from thousands of grassroots volunteer efforts that took place on Oct. 22, 2011, Make A Difference Day. Millions of Americans served their communities and made positive changes as a result of the volunteer action encouraged by the nationwide annual event.

Jersey City's the **BIG DIG**, was supported by an army of more than 600 volunteers from across the city, as well as the Mayor's Office, the Division of Parks & Forestry and the Division of Cultural Affairs.

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Dozens of city parks, select open spaces, schools, libraries, historic cemeteries and gateways to the city are now blooming in yellows, oranges and reds as the bulbs that were planted have now blossomed.

“From the outset, this was a winning partnership and illustrated perfectly how public-private partnerships and volunteerism are key for governments at all levels to succeed,” said **Mayor Healy**. “For the past few years, my office has been involved in recognizing Make A Difference Day with events in Jersey City, however, this was the first time we had one, overarching event for the entire city. We thank the Jersey City Parks Coalition for this concept of coordinated bulb planting throughout the city and for all of their hard work to get this project off the ground.”

The Parks Coalition volunteers handled fundraising by reaching out to Jersey City’s vast corporate community, raising nearly \$15,000 to help cover the cost of the bulbs and gardening supplies. The City identified the parks, prepared some sites for digging, and began promotion of the event through press releases, on our website and Facebook page, and through other media. More than 600 volunteers participated in the planting, including members from other non-profits, school teachers and students, scouts, members of civic organizations and representatives from the corporate community.

In addition to sponsorship from the City of Jersey City, the BIG DIG was sponsored by Century 21 Plaza Realty, the Hudson County Improvement Authority, the Liberty Science Center, the West Side Community Alliance/Honeywell, the Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority, Liberty State Park, PSE&G, United Water, and The Westin Jersey City, as well as many other local businesses, organizations, and residents.

This was the first citywide event for the Jersey City Parks Coalition although the Coalition has established Community Gardens in 10 of their 14 member parks groups. Since 2004, spring plantings and fall bulbs have been making a difference in parks such as Pershing Field, Van Vorst Park, Riverview-Fisk Park, Sgt. Anthony Park, Ercel Webb Park, as well as Washington Park and Lincoln Park.

“This event was a great way to really make a difference in the community and now that the bulbs are in bloom, we are seeing the impact this project had on neighborhoods throughout the City,” said **Charlene Burke, project manager for the BIG DIG**. “Many of the participants have provided us with photos from the 80 planting sites, which we have posted on The Jersey City Parks Coalition facebook page. We hope that everyone involved will look forward to BIG DIG 2012.”

**The ten 2012 Make A Difference Day Award honorees are:**

- Summer Search North Bay, Petaluma, Calif.
- The United Way of Lake County, Waukegan, Ill.
- The Marys & Marthas and the people of Clarion, Iowa
- Girl Scouts of Madisonville Housing Authority Troop 333, Madisonville, Ky.
- Mary Vail, Las Vegas, Nev.
- Victory Christian Church, Albany, N.Y.
- Joyce and John Jackson, Delaware, Ohio
- Neha Gupta, Yardley, Penn.
- Eleanor Schoenbrun, El Paso, Texas
- The Ellis Family, Rhinelander, Wis.

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**The three 2012 City Award honorees are:**

- The Jersey City Parks Coalition and Jersey City, N.J.
- City of Salisbury, N.C.
- Strong Neighborhoods Program, San Jose, Calif.

**The All-Star Award goes to:**

- Lucas Metropolis, Boca Raton, Fla. and Durham, N.C.

“This event goes to the heart of Gannett’s purpose to serve the greater good of our nation and the communities we serve. Every year, millions act upon our invitation to reach out to others in their community. It’s inspiring to see how our audience responds and the good that comes out of this one day,” said Heather Frank, editor-in-chief of *USA WEEKEND*.

All of the award recipients will be featured in this weekend’s edition of *USA WEEKEND*.

**Make A Difference Day 2012** will be held on Saturday, Oct. 27. For more information, please go to [www.makeadifferenceday.com](http://www.makeadifferenceday.com).

**All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///**